

## Points from Letters

### DIRT OVER ENGLAND

Books have been written with the titles "Fire Over England," "War Over England," &c. I think a good one would be "Dirt Over England"! During the past year, or so I have travelled over the Continent as a transatlantic visitor, and have also, I think, been in every county in Britain. I have never seen such filth on any roads or commons—cigarette-cases, chocolate covers, torn and discarded newspapers, litter of every description; and from observation I think young women of a certain class are worse than the men.—LOUIS DE BRISEY, Montreal, Canada.

### BEASTLY PLURALS

Your delightfully convincing leading article settles once for all the question of "beastly plurals"—and singulars. I do not wish then *enforcer une porte ouverte* (I write from France), but I could not help thinking, and even shivering, at the prospect of the extension of the process of amputation of words into the realm of extinct species also, and to see the splendid dinosaur appear in the disguise of dino, or the gigantic megatherium in that of mega. Nor could I evade the nightmare thought that a distinguished botanist might suggest rhodo for the royally magnificent rhododendron.—M. D. CACLAMANOS, CATTINGTON House, Hertford Street, W.1.

### THUNDERBOLTS

Some years ago—I think it was in 1936—I was on parade at Gibraltar, and was facing towards the north. I suddenly saw an exceedingly bright flash, high up in the sky; but heard no report. On the following day I read in a Spanish newspaper that a "bolido" had exploded over Madrid, with a deafening report, causing intense consternation in the city. The sky was absolutely cloudless at the time. The moment of the explosion corresponded exactly with that in which I had observed the bright flash. Madrid would be distant about 350 miles.—MR. A. M. ADDISON, 5, Cromwell Crescent, S.W.5.

### BUNHILL FIELDS

It is true, and much to be regretted, that London's disused burial grounds and churchyards are not all laid out and made use of as gardens, but perhaps Mr. David Rhydderch has not been fortunate enough to visit those which have been so dealt with and which, with their trees, flowers, and grass, have been made available to the public, provided with seats, and form health-giving lungs in the midst of brick and mortar. Even the grounds with which the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association (with its limited income derived from voluntary contributions) has been and is concerned present a neat and tidy appearance and are much used, especially by office workers during lunch hours. There are, of course, numerous other such grounds maintained by parochial church councils; or by the local authorities in whose areas they are situated; some of them are a joy to behold and are greatly appreciated by the public who frequent them. If this association had the funds placed at its disposal it would be in a position to improve, for the benefit of the public, some of those disused burial grounds and churchyards which do not present so pleasing an appearance as they might, provided the necessary permission were obtained.—MISS EILEEN DEWE, Secretary, Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, 20, Denison House, 296, Vauxhall Bridge Road, S.W.1.

### PIGEONS

The matter referred to in the letter from Mrs. Barron is found on the Southern Railway to be a growing menace, and it would appear that the time has arrived when national and local authorities should consider the pigeon in the same way as they do vermin. During recent years there is no doubt that wild pigeons in London have been on the increase and serious damage is occurring to buildings, merchandise, and also people. Frequent complaints are received by the Southern Railway from people who have been victims of these birds and who state that their clothing has been ruined. It would now appear to be necessary to change the public from their sentimental feeling towards these birds and place pigeons under the same category as rats, grey squirrels, and other animals who form a menace to hygiene and cleanliness.—MR. C. GASEMANN, Public Relations and Advertising Officer, Southern Railway.

### WASP STINGS

It is to be hoped that many will follow Mr. R. W. Wells's example in recording the result of trial by litmus. Since August, 1919, I have several times repeated the experiment, always with the result of blue spots on pink test-paper. To-day I got the same result. However, after several stings had apparently exhausted the poison as no more blue spots occurred, I made the wasp sting blue paper, with the immediate result of a pink spot. This would seem to show that wasp stings can be either alkaline or acid. Mr. O. H. Latter, in his "Bees and Wasps" (Cambridge Manuals, 1913), states:—

Both Cartet and Bordas, who have investigated this matter, state that the poison is formed by the mixture of the secretion of two glands, one of which is acid (formic acid) and the other alkaline. Cartet states that the poison of the Fosters' larger wasp, which has merely a stupefactive action is deficient in the alkaline constituent.

I would put forward the suggestion that the major poison either in quality or quantity in the wasp sting is alkaline. In practice I have never had a moment's anxiety since adopting the acid treatment after reading Mr. E. K. Speyer's letter in 1919. I had previously had uniformly disappointing results with alkaline applications.—DR. O. H. BROWN, 77, Woodbridge Hill, Guildford.

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*The Times* (London, England), Tuesday, Aug 30, 1938; pg. 6; Issue 48086. (914 words)

**Category:** Letters to the Editor

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**Gale Document Number:**CS102314782